

The Thirties

tages, and made a general election seem a hazardous undertaking.

In this perplexity a step was taken which, in the light of subsequent events, became merely laughable. The Prime Minister drove down to Churt to interview Mr. Lloyd George, who was recovering from an illness. MacDonald's purpose was to find out the terms on which Mr. Lloyd George would participate in the National Government. He went without much expectation of success, and came away probably on the whole relieved that so incalculable an ally was not available. Their interview is unlikely to have proceeded very smoothly. MacDonald had already experienced what being dependent on Mr. Lloyd George's support was like, and cannot have much relished the prospect of more and closer collaboration; his ponderous and incoherent earnestness, always distasteful to Mr. Lloyd George's impish nature, was more than ever so now that he had come to be admired by *The Times* and to be the associate of Mr. Baldwin and Sir John Simon, not to mention Sir Herbert Samuel. They spent half an hour or so together, and then parted, MacDonald to speed back to his anxious colleagues, Mr. Lloyd George to meditate in his darkening sickroom on the strange vagaries of political life, whereby a man whom he had once tried to send to Russia with a view to his propitiating revolutionaries there, but been prevented by the refusal of the Seamen's Union to countenance the transportation of so subversive and unpatriotic a passenger, should thirteen years later invite him to join a

predominantly Conservative and entirely respectable Government.

It was the last occasion on which, Mr. Lloyd George came within measurable distance of office. His following was soon to dwindle to a family group, his influence to become negligible.

Henceforth, his was to be an individual performance, often sparkling, always irresponsible, but of no serious account in the House of Commons or outside. As an amateur farmer he achieved some fame, giving his name to a popular brand of raspberries. His journalism, particularly in the United States,